

A View from the Pew

by Deacon Greg Kandra

To Life: Homily for Respect Life Sunday

Since this is Respect Life month, I wanted to talk about one woman who did respect life.

Her name is Joanne Schieble. In 1954, she was a young unmarried college student who discovered that she was pregnant. In the 1950s, her options were limited. She could have had an abortion — but the procedure was both dangerous and illegal. She could have gotten married, but she wasn't ready and didn't want to interrupt her education. Joanne opted, instead, to give birth to the baby and put it up for adoption.

And so it was that in 1955, a California couple named Paul and Clara Jobs adopted a baby boy, born out of wedlock, that they named Steven.

We know him today as Steve Jobs.

It would not be overstating things to say that Steve Jobs was my generation's Thomas Edison. As one observer put it, he knew what the world wanted before the world knew what it wanted it.

If you have an iPhone or an iPad, or anything remotely resembling them, you can thank Steve Jobs.

If your world has been transformed by the ability to hear a symphony, send a letter, pay a bill, deposit a check, read a book and then buy theater tickets on something roughly the size of a credit card ... you can thank Steve Jobs.

And you can thank Joanne Schieble.

If you want to know how much one life can matter, there is just one example.

But imagine if that life had never happened.

Imagine if an unmarried pregnant college student 56 years ago had made a different choice. Now, imagine all the unmarried pregnant college students who make that different choice today.

The horrifying truth is this: We live now in a culture that not only does not respect life, but discards it like trash — not only at the beginning of life, but also the end, and every place in between.

In Europe, there's a new industry of "suicide tourism," for people who are old or infirm and want to kill themselves. In California, when it was announced during a political debate that a number of people had been executed in Texas, hundreds of people in the audience applauded.

What has happened to us?

Catholics can disagree about whether the death penalty is necessary. But we can't disagree about this: cheering death — any death, especially when someone may be innocent — is an affront to life. And yet we do it so easily. And that is part of the problem.

Life has become disposable.

The *New York Times* once told about the practice called "singleton" — where women pregnant with triplets or twins have one or more of the babies aborted.

We don't talk about it often, but it needs to be said: The reason we don't see many children with Down Syndrome isn't because of some great medical breakthrough. It's because roughly 90% of them are being aborted.

What has happened to us? When will it end?

This nightmare will end when we pass on what we all know to be true: For all its complexity and complications, all its sorrows and fears, all its headaches and heartaches ... *life matters.*

Every life. At every moment.

It will end when we teach our children that nothing, and no one, is ever discarded. Remember the multiplication of the loaves and fishes? That episode ended with the people gathering up every crumb. Because every crumb was a part of that miracle. No one, no thing, no life is wasted in the incredible work of God.

©Deacon Greg Kandra, 2017